

A
LETTER
FROM A . A.B.C.
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Country Justice of the Peace
TO AN
Alderman of the City of *London*, &c.
CONCERNING
The Bishop of *Salisbury's* SPEECH in
the House of LORDS,
Upon the BILL against
Occasional Conformity.

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A LETTER from a Country Justice of the Peace to an Alderman of the City of London, &c. concerning the Bishop of Salisbury's Speech in the House of Lords, upon the Bill against Occasional Conformity.

SIR,

I Thank you for your Present of the *Bishop of Salisbury's Speech*, not for the *worth* of it, but for your *kindness* in sending it, that I might try if I could learn any thing from it concerning the uncouth and mysterious Proceedings of the Times. But I somewhat wonder why you should desire my Sentiments of it, who live reserved and remote from the Managery of State Affairs, when I might rather expect that from you, who dwell among the *Beauxs* and the *Wits*, the *Censorious Critics*, *Active Zealots*, and *Politick Statesmen*, where you have the opportunity to know the various Opinions of all sorts of Men, and thence to *frame* or *confound* your Judgment, according as your Skill may serve you to unravel such Intricacy; yet perhaps you may do it for this very Reason, that you think me in my Recess to be more free, unprejudiced, and disentangled from these, whether *Lights* or *Obstacles*, wherewith you abound. However, be it as it will, I shall not stick to gratifie your Request, if it were for no other Reason but that you were never backward to gratifie me in any thing I could reasonably desire; and I was about to say, that I would do it with all *Indifferency* and *Impartiality*, but I began to fear that might render me *suspected*: For I have observed, that of late the greatest *Canary Birds* make the most *solemn Professions* and *deepest Proteftations* of the Lord knows what, and how much *Sincerity* and *Integrity*, when at the same time a Man must be either very weak in his *Intellectualls*, or have a strange prevailing Power over himself, who can really think that they mean *honestly*. I will therefore answer your Desires without more ado, and leave you to be judge of the *Sincerity* and *Impartiality* of the Performance.

The Reverend Person indeed hints something in the beginning concerning the *Bill against Occasional Conformity*; but then he treats it as a *Scotch Presbyterian* would his *Text*, who has no sooner named and read it, but he fairly takes leave of it, and meddles with any thing rather than it, unless they chance to meet again in the close, to shake hands at parting. No sooner is the *Bill* mentioned, but (*Hiccius Doctius*) he is gone, whirls over *various Reigns and divers Regions*, more swiftly than if he were mounted on *Paccolet's Horse*; then to make it the more entertaining, he furnisheth you with variety of Stories, and much like *Tatling Fame*, tells sometimes *Truth*, and sometimes *Lies*, but neither much to the purpose. For

his Cause would not bear close Argument ; and therefore instead of satisfying, he prudently makes it his business to make a Noise and Amuse. But though this may shew his great Skill, yet I cannot conceive what great commendation it is of his Honesty or Ingenuity : And it seems somewhat unaccountable to me, that a Man of his Parts and long Experience should either have such an over-weaning Conceit of himself, or so mean an Opinion of all others, as to think himself able to impose upon the rest of Mankind, and that they would prove either such Fools or Madmen as to take those Ramblements for Reasonings, and such a Mass of Inconsistencies for Proofs.

But before I come to Particulars, wherein I intend to be as short as may be, I must crave your leave to make one more general Observation upon his way and manner of handling this Matter, which seems to me to be either very absurd, or to favour of some extraordinary Design. For why should an Advocate for Moderation plead for it with so much bitterness ? What need was there of so much Heat and Zeal to promote Looseness and Indifferency ? Why such a mighty Stickler for Fanaticks, and such contemptible Expressions of those of his own Way and Order ? Why such Pains to exalt the one, and to pull down the other, than which a greater kindness cannot be done to Popery ? Why such Commendations of Men, whom you can never know what they are, nor where to have them, nor what they would be at, and such loud Outcries against Plain Dealing and Fixt Principles ? I will not pretend to reconcile these Matters, but I wish you could discover to me the mystical Reason of it : Certainly it is not from the Nature of the Thing ; for one would expect that a Discourse of Moderation should be smooth and oily : And though the subtil Author had intended that his Words should be as bitter as Gall in the Belly, yet he ought to have made them as sweet as Honey in the Mouth. Perhaps you may say, this proceeds from the Temper and Humour of the Author ; but I cannot easily agree to that ; for he is known to be a Person of Eminent Parts, and Learning and Skill, to manage both, who (as the Geneva Ballad learnedly has it)

To gain his Ends, can Whine ;
And as Occasion serves, can Roar.

And therefore it might have been reasonably expected, that he should have made his Discourse suitable to his Subject. Well, I must confess myself at a loss for a Reason of such Manegery ; and I wish you and the Wits about you, would unriddle the Mystery for me. For my part, when I had cast about all I could, I must have remained still a Seeker, unless the Comedian may be allowed to relieve me with his *aliquid Monstri alunt.*

But now to trace him *pedetentim*, I think it not worth my while to take notice of the becoming Zeal he boasts of in the Entrance : For it is not the first time I have known a bad Cause sanctifie as bad Actions, and transform the most violent and indecent Proceedings into the height of Christian

Christian Zeal, at least if the Parties themselves might be believed. But he confesseth, that the Bill in Sound and first Appearance, seems to be intended for the Service of the Church, and therefore he thinks he labours under a disadvantage to speak against it, and more especially as being one of the Bench of Bishops; and truly I think so too, and so will others, when he hath done all he can. But is the securing the Church from those, who by Principle hate it, and whose Interest and Design is to destroy it, and the preserving the State from having her Counsels confounded and betrayed, nothing but meer Sound and Seeming? This Phrase certainly came from a hollow Vessel, or else more would have been allowed it, and a kinder Character given it. But be that as it will, his Reverence is fully convinced, that it is not for the Service of the Church, and that how well soever it may be intended by some, the effect of it will be quite contrary. Either he is a Man of strange foresight, or hath borrowed old St. Asaph's Spectacles, or perhaps learnt it from him at one of his Lectures upon the Revelations; but by what means soever he foresees these dire Effects, seeing he is so fully convinced himself, I hope he will be able to convince others in some good measure, though not so fully: But then I am afraid he must be at the trouble to write again. For I can find nothing in this Paper that in the least convinceth me of the mischievousness of the Bill, though enough to satisfie me of the Rage of the Prelate. However, seeing he pretends to Argument, let us try what we can make of it.

But, alas! Mischief hath befallen us at the very beginning; for he saith he is bound up as to this Particular, and determined by a Promise solemnly made to the Queen. What pity is it, that so great an Author should set out in Fetters? A Promise, and that solemnly made, is a strong Tie upon some kind of Men: But do you think any Promise can bind that Man whom an Oath cannot? But let him be bound, for all that he will fright you with rattling his Chains. But pray, what is it that binds the Good Man, whose Tongue or Pen could never be bound yet? Why, he tells us, That Her Majesty recommended UNION to them with a peculiar veneration of Style. Did She so? And doth this bind you up? I find Union is no Friend of yours. And yet I think neither a Queen nor a Christian need be ashamed of such a Recommendation; but then, I think, that in recommending Union, She did in effect recommend the Bill, which would have been the great procurer and securer of Union; and where it could not procure Union, would have secured Peace and Quiet; and they are worth something. But now that Union is recommended, he tells you how zealous a Stickler he is resolved to be for it. But hark you, Sir, a word in your Ear, if you have patience to bear it; When you have driven Bulls, and Bears, and Goats, and Lions, and Lambs, and Sheep, all in a Herd together, do you call this Union? If a Man should bind or tie several strong unruly Creatures together, which have an aversion to each other, and would certainly draw several ways, till they pull'd each other in pieces, they might be said to be in some sort united,

united, but after such a sort that they had much better been *asunder*. But these are noble Projects of Comprehension, such as *enlarged Souls* are aiming at ; though we, poor silly Wretches, cannot understand how it is either safe or practicable. Some People of late are very apt to call things by wrong Names, and when there is such a stir to jumble all together, I begin to grow jealous, that they have a mind to impose *Confusion* on us for *Union* : And I remember I have heard some call it the *Onion*, which is somewhat ominous, as if it were much fitter to make us *weep* than *rejoice*. Philosophers (and our Author would take it ill to be thought second to any in that Kind, unless to another of his Name, who understood the making the World better than *Moses*) ; I say, Philosophers by *Union* in such cases as ours, commonly understood a *Union of Wills*, not a putting together of *Antipathies* ; but a celebrated Divine, to be satisfied concerning a *Christian Union*, might have look'd into the *Word of God*, which would have told him, that it was to be like-minded one towards another, according to *Christ Jesus*, that we may with one mind and one mouth glorifie God, (*Rom. 15. 5, 6.*) or as it is in another place, to walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing, (*Phil. 3. 16.*) And certainly this is very odly performed, by being occasionally every thing, and fixedly nothing. If therefore your pretended Zeal for *Union* be for that which is a true Christian *Union*, you will henceforward be a greater Favourer of the Bill, and less a Friend to such tricking Conformity, as unstable, double-minded Men have only occasion for, when their worldly Interest invites or engages them to it.

He comes on in the next place with a grievous Complaint, That *some of his Order, as well as himself in particular, have been very indecently, and, he hopes, very unjustly too, treated in many Printed Libels, upon this very Account*. I know Men are naturally inclined not to speak very-magnificently of such who besoul their own Nest, and betray their own Cause ; and till Treachery and Falshood can be made to pass for as great *Vertues* as some Mens *Moderation*, honest Men will be apt to have hard *Thoughts* of them, and perhaps let fall some hard *Speeches*. But I shall not concern my self, whether they have been undecently treated, nor yet whether they deserved it or not ; but I am desirous to know, what this makes against the *Bill*, which indeed seems to me to make for it : For the passing that would either have stopt their Mouths, who exclaim against the *Order*, or at least have secured it, notwithstanding petulant and lavish Tongues : And if for obstructing this, you have been, shall hereafter be undecently treated, I think you may thank your selves. But still he cannot be persuaded, that he is any *Enemy to the Church* ; for he hopes he may appeal to the *World*, and to his *Diocese* in particular, whether his *Labours* do not shew a true *Zeal* for the *Church* in all its *Concerns*. There is nothing more serviceable to a bad *Cause* than a brazen Forehead ; I think there can be no danger in admitting the Appeal, if *Church-men* may be *Judges* ; but if *Prelates* must be supported by

by the Suffrages of *Fanaticks*, though they serve him, while he serves their Turn, yet they will serve him the same Trick that the Devil does the *Witch*, and fail him at last. I have heard of a Person, (whose Name is so like our Author's, that it hath been taken for the same) who being altogether dissatisfyed with *Presbyterian Ordination*, made his Application to a certain *Prelate*, and *Kinsman*, for *Episcopal Ordination*, but was not only denied, but so ratled and schooled for it, that in rage and discontent he went over to the Church of *Rome*: Does not this shew his true Zeal for the Church? I have been told, that a certain Reverend Father took no small pains to reconcile two *Dissenting Ministers*, who were fallen out bitterly upon a ridiculous Occasion, and all with design that they might maintain their *Conventicles* with more Advantage against the *Established Church*; and also how he cajol'd and caref'sd Mr. C——y, and others of his Tribe, when he treated many of his own Clergy with Contempt and Scorn: Whether these, and other things commonly reported be true, that Person best knows; however, others ought to be so civil as not to think otherwise, but that he did these things in True Zeal for the Church's Service. But if you can believe him, there is a very cogent Reason, why you ought to be very charitable in your Judgment of him; for the Good Man labours under a severe Persecution; for he says, that he is a *Disciple of the Cross*, and must go thro' good Report and ill Report. What he is, I will not say; what he ought to be, I can tell: But it seems strange to me, that a Man who wallows in *Plenty*, and might also in *Ease*, if his restless Temper would suffer it, should complain of Persecution: And it seems yet stranger to me, how the Cross can lay hold on such Persons, who to avoid Danger or gain their Ends, can stretch their Consciences to comply with any thing. These look more like Disciples of their *Worldly Interest*, than the *Cross of Christ*. But let him be in a State of Persecution, and he can glory in it, and boast of it. He is so well known, he says, has lived so long in a Publick Scene, and acted such a part on it, that he reckons himself above Calumnies; but I hope not above Truth: I like not such Scenes and Actings, which are always *Turbulent* and *Tragical*. But if he boast and glory in his Persecutions, he is not destitute of a good Precedent and Warrant for what he doth; for, saith he, Even St. Paul said, *He became a fool in glorying*. But did St. Paul glory in his *Shame*? Or, did he account Hectoring and Huffing in the enjoyment of Power and Wealth, to be a State of Persecution? It is known when the Devil made use of Scripture, even to our Blessed Saviour, for his own Ends; and it is become a Practice too common among some sort of Men, so to abuse the Holy Scriptures to little better purposes, that it hath given no small advantage and encouragement to *Papists* to rave both against the Name of *Protestants*, and even against the Holy Scriptures themselves; it is a burning shame, that such things be not redress'd, or at least censured.

Hitherto we have little that can effect the Act ; and the two following Paragraphs are as little to the purpose, though much more abounding with Malice ; therein he makes it his business to complain of the *Severities among us in every Reign since the Reformation* ; he should have said, in every Protestant Reign ; for, either out of kindness or design, he hath not a word of the *Papists*. *Joan Butcher*, a notorious turbulent Heretick, was condemn'd to be burnt, according to the Laws of those Times, in the Reign of *Edward VI.* yet could not the compassionate King be prevailed on to sign the Warrant for her Execution, till his Godfather *Archbishop Cranmer*, a Man far from Cruelty, convinced him of the necessity of it ; and for this his whole Reign must be *blasted*. Queen *Elizabeth*, by some necessary Executions, put a stop to the growth of Faction, and frustrated the dangerous and desperate Designs of some seditious fanatical Persons, whereby she secured the Safety of her *Reign*, and the *Peace and Ease* of her Subjects : But by this means she had like to have crushed the Serpent in the Egg, which if she had done, this reverend Person might have wanted a Theme to declamie on, and these Combustions might not have been at this day ; and therefore she is never to be forgiven. We are next told, that *Severities cast a blot upon the Reign of King James I.* but he doth not instance in any, and I am not inclinable to take his bare word for any thing, but particularly not in this matter, because I find, that those, who are most prone to condemn that King, do it upon a quite contrary account, censuring him for being merciful to a Fault. And as for the Reigns of *Charles the First* and *Second*, I did expect no less from a Patron of Fanaticks, but that he should *blacken* them all he could, both to cover the Wickedness of that Party, and to encourage them to proceed : Instead of relating the *Unnatural Rebellion* against the *Best of Kings*, and his *Barbarous Murther* superadded thereto, he endeavours, with his Friend Dr. *Kennet*, to make King *Charles I.* a *Felo de se* ; and they would have thought themselves happy Men, if they could have done as much for King *Charles II.* but he proved too cunning for all the false Brethren, which puts our Author to his trumps, and makes him take Sanctuary in his wonderful Knowldg of the *Secret of that time*, which very wisely he will discover to no body : But might there not be other Secrets which he might be as well acquainted with ? Had not the Men of *Shaftsbury* their *Secrets* ? What think you of the Blades at the time of the *Oxford Parliament* ? Had they no *Secrets* ? Nor had the *Rye-House Conspirators* any such thing ? But if you have any of their *Secrets*, I suppose you intend to keep them so, and reserve them for use ; but it would be a villainous Disappointment to you, and vex you to the heart if your Fellow-Traveller *R. Ferrer* should discover them ; I am afraid it would make a foul House. For some secret reason or other he doth not here bring K. *James II.* upon the Stage, tho' he doth not escape him afterwards. But when he hath bespattered all the *Protestant Princes* since the *Reformation*, for a secret reason best known to himself, he meddles not with any *Papist*, not a word of Queen *Mary*,

Mary, in whose Reign were Burnings more than now ; nor can he spy the least Fault in his dear K. W. though (if he be not foully bely'd) he was an Occasional Conformist with the Papists in their highest act of Communion, and that in defiance of their very Act of Settlement, which makes Reconciliation to Rome a Forfeiture of the Crown : Nay, he could not remeber so much as Glenco, or Darien, nor a Person made a Prelate, in all haste, to the end, that the first time he put on his *Lawn Sleeves*, he might dip 'em in Blood ; nor many more fine Stories, which he could wish were greater Secrets than they are : And certainly there is some secret reason for this Partiality ; for a Man that serves some Mens turns may kill and slay, and be a Saviour, whilst another, who displease them, shall be represented as black as Hell, if he do but offer to be just. Rather than their Design should be frustrated, some Men would bring the Curse of Israel upon us, that every Man should do what is right in his own eyes, without Controulment ; and when Knaves and Villains had done all the Mischief they could, they should still scape scott-free, not so much as just Punishment must be allowed, lest we be accounted cruel or severe ; and so Government must be made not only the most precarious but most idle insignificant thing in the World ; and every King that is not for their purpose, must be allow'd to be no more active than Jupiter's Log which he dropt into the Pond for a King of the Frogs ; and if they can be content to be so, they shall be used accordingly.

Our Kings and Queens have made now their Exit off the Stage for a while ; who comes next to fill the Scene ? If you please, enter Lord Stafford, who makes discovery of an Oath of Secrecy tender'd by the Earl of Bristol to the chief Papists met together ; but where it was done is still a Secret ; and this is to affect the Act by way of Prophesie, long before it was thought on. But how came he to know this ? That sure is plain enough ; for he tells us, that the Lord Stafford told it to him in the Tower, and that he told it likewise at the Bar of their House : But doth he tell this with the Authority of an Historian or a Traveller ? (for it is well known he hath been both) If of a Traveller, then let it have a Traveller's Authority, and the Proverb for its Voucher : But if with the Authority of an Historian, it is well known, that he was not then a Member of that House, and so in all likelihood did not hear it at that Bar ; however, there are several Members still living, who did hear his Confession at that Bar, and say, that they think it was ingenuous, but deny that he there made any such Confession of such Oath of Secrecy ; and as for what this Reverend Prelate saith that Lord told him in the Tower, it is also known, that he was then only in Priest's Orders, and so could only visit him in the Quality of a Priest ; and it is small encouragement to any Person to trust that Man, who so openly blabs what was told him in Confession : But suppose the Lord Stafford had authoriz'd him to let this be known, yet why was it kept so long a Secret, and not divulg'd till now ? The Government might have suffered by such Concealment. But though I am not very forward to give credit to him in this particular, yet I verily believe, that there are few Party-Men,

whether there be any form'd Plot or not, who are not desirous to promote the Interest and Growth of that Party whereof they are; and if they can once screw themselves into sufficient Interest, Power, and Strength, they will scarce spare any Person or Government, which stands in the way of their Designs; and therefore let the Politicos say what they will, it is certainly the great Strength and Safety of any Government to be free from Faction, or to have as little of it as may be, and those unable to hurt; but it is impossible that any Government should be long safe or quiet, where a turbulent daring Faction o'ertops the Government it self; any Government in such case hath no prospect of Safety, but in taking heart and exerting it self with all its might; for such persons must either be *ruled*, or they will *rule*, and perhaps with a *Vengeance*. And there are some persons, who think they have good reason more than barely to suspect, that some such thing is now aim'd at, and that such a Game is playing underhand, which that Act (which hath so unhappily miscarried) would have spoiled, which is the great reason that many are so bitterly bent and cry out against it. And if this do not alarm the Government to take care of it self, I know not what can.

From thing to thing and place to place our Author leaps as nimbly as a Squirrel from Bough to Bough, it is hard to keep pace with him, and would tire out any Man's patience to follow him such a Wild-Goose-Chase to so little purpose; he's next got among the Papists and Dissenters, and endeavouring to tye them Tail to Tail, like Sampson's Foxes, but it seems the Thread broke at this time, and would not hold them; for the Dissenters could not be brought to it, to accept the Assistance of the Papists, in order to petition for a general Toleration: And by what follows it should seem, that whatever they do now, they did not then approve it; for when afterwards all those wild Cattle were let loose by a General Toleration, which put the Nation in such a Hubbub and Confusion, that the next Parliament procur'd it to be recall'd, and the Test-Act was made to learn them better Behaviour, and keep them in somewhat better order. Alderman Love, a known Dissenter, instead of opposing, voted for that Act; and for the so doing, this Reverend Author makes him give such a reason as would have obliged him to vote also for this Act, if he were living and continued in the same mind. And I cannot but wonder, that he should relate, that he said, that *nothing, with relation to them, should intervene, to stop the Security that the Nation and the Protestant Religion would have by that Act*: For that very fame Security which was intended by that Act, but since eluded, was intended by this; nay, abating the preventing the Elusion of the design of the Act, this Act did not take so high a Security as that; for this Act allows a Toleration, and disturbs no Man in the peaceable and quiet enjoyment of his own Conscience, if he can be content with that: But when that Act was made, Toleration was recalled, and the Dissenters lay open to all the Penal Laws. This looks like arguing so strongly for the

the Bill, that some persons would be apt to call it a Betraying his Cause ; but perhaps he hath a secret meaning, which his Party understands, thô others do not, and that will salve all. As for what he says concerning the King being *highly offended with the Dissenters, for their giving up his Declaration,* I suppose it is one of those *Secrets* which he so often boasts of, and either is of his own making, or known to few or none but himself : For if others, who very well knew the state of those Times, have spoken truth, the matter is quite otherwise ; for the War at that time bore hard upon the *Dutch*, and had it been managed and pursued as some thought it might have been, in all likelihood it had been fatal to that *State*. This some ill Ministers, who had none of the honestest Designs of their own to serve, lay hold on, and persuade the King, that if a Toleration were granted, the best and richest *Dutch* Merchants (their present Danger consider'd) would draw over their Effects, and come and settle, and bring that Trade hither : But when the King found it had no such effect, but on the contrary, had set his own Kingdom in a flame, he was so far from being angry with the *Dissenters* for *giving up his Declaration*, that his Indignation was great, and that very justly, against those *Ministers of State* who had prevail'd with him to *give it out* ; for it shook the Crown on his Head, and he did not quickly nor easily recover that Blow : So that our Author might have spared this, for any service it can do his Cause, or any thing it can make against the *Bill*.

But to proceed wth this Learned Doctor's History ; *in the end of King Charles's Reign, we all remember* (saith he) *that a new Prosecution of them* (i. e. the *Dissenters*) *was set on foot* : How comes it to pass, that he doth not call it a *Persecution*? For he may remember it by a very good Token, it being not very long before he *translated his Allegiance*, for which perhaps he may remember it with a Spirit of Revenge ; but let him remember what he will, that Prosecution was manag'd with that Caution and Prudence, that it opened the Eyes of many of the *Dissenters* to see their Error, cool'd the hot Spirits of the rest, and made the latter end of that King's Reign easie to himself and comfortable to his Subjects ; and had his Brother, in that respect, trod in his steps, we had felt none of those Troubles and Convulsions we now groan under, but might have been the quietest, if not the *richest* and *happiest* People under the Cope of Heaven ; and what pity is it, that all these should be sacrificed to the *Madness* and *Folly* of some, and the *Guilt* and *Ambition* of others ? But notwithstanding these Severities (as he calls them) he tells us, That the *Dissenters* were *solicited by the Agents of the Court, to petition for a General Toleration, but they could not be prevail'd on* : If it were so, they had good reason for it ; for they knew the King had paid so dear for his Experience in that kind, that they were sure he would never be induced to grant it, and their Strength was then to sit still, and not further exasperate him. But here is a very untoward *Inuendo* ; for he all along makes the *Papists* the Sollicitors of the *Dissenters*, to struggle for this *General Toleration*, and consequently

quently you are to understand these *Court-Agents* to be *Papists*, which is as much as to say, that the *Men of Busines*s and *Power at Courts* were mostly *Papists*. It will concern them, who were *Court-Ministers* at that time, to clear themselves from this Aspersion ; but I know it is too common a thing of late, for some waspish envious Persons, when they know not how otherwise to do a Man a Mischief, they call him a *Papist*, and endeavour to set the *Mob* upon him, when it is well known, that he who is called *Papist* is farther from it, than those who call him so. But hitherto, if you believe our Author, the *Dissenters* would not accept a *Toleration*, if the *Papists* had any hand in *procuring* it ; but certainly he that values it so much, might have taught them better things ; for one would think that a *Toleration*, which must be parted with on no account, might be obtained upon any terms. But as zealous as he is seemingly against *Papists*, if he had examined his *Private Remarks*, or looked into his *Secret Histories* during the several Reigns he mentions, he might have found several times, wherein there was a much better Understanding between the *Papists* and *Dissenters*, than he is willing to acknowledg ; and that they have often joyned hands against both *Church* and *State*, is so notorious a thing, that I need not bring Instances ; and at last he is forced to confess little less ; for (saith he) *What some of them did in King James's Reign is well known, and cannot be excused* : Whether it can or not, I will not concern my self, there are some, who think it ought not ; but certainly it must be a very *unpardonable Crime*, for which the pregnant Brain of this Author cannot find or frame an *Excuse*, especially for that his *Beloved Party*, for whom he is always so zealous ; and certainly if any Man could have excused them, he ought to have done it ; for they were every where highly instrumental in bringing that busines about, for which he came over ; and therefore in gratitude for their Kindnes and Assistance they ought not to have been inexcusable with him, whatever they were with others : But if it be lawful to guess, why in this particular Case he leaves his Dear Friends in the lurch, and makes them inexcusable, perhaps it may be this, That *Toleration* was generally thought to be design'd against the *Establish'd Church*, it much disoblighed that King's best *Friends*, and rais'd him *Enemies* in all Parts, yet still he went on every where caressing the *Dissenters*, and they for their parts follow'd him with *Addresses*, and promised him mighty matters ; and who so great *Friends* and *Favourites* with the *King* as they ? And yet as soon as opportunity offer'd, they not only *forsook* but *betray'd* and *gave him up*. Now in this Case he could hardly have made any *Excuse* for them, which would not have been more an *Excuse* for that unfortunate Prince, whom he cannot afford a good word, tho he is safe in his *Grave*, and cannot hurt him. But tho' this might prevail with him not to make any *Excuse* for them, yet I cannot conceive why he of all men should say, *They cannot be excused* : for is it such a *Crime* in them to accept that from K. *James* which he not only allows them to accept from K. *William*, but persuades, exhorts and conjures them not to part with on any Terms ? And they may freely and

and undisturbedly enjoy it for me, provided they can be content with that without grasping and overturning all to our utter ruine. They were in possession of *Toleratian* when the P. of O. Landed; and when he had posseſſ'd himself of his *Father's Throne*, and wrought his *Wonderful Deliverance*, our Author (though in Language not very becoming a Prelate) tells us, That *his next care was to secure the Church of England by the Act of Toleration*. So that here is no new thing, sauing that the one procured that to be passed into an *Act*, which the other could not obtain. But I confess, I am somewhat scandalized at his Talk of *securing the Church of England by the Act of Toleration*. It is much like securing a Man's House by throwing down the Walls, or fencing his Close by pulling up the Hedges; such a contradiction in *Terminis* would never have been allowed to pass from any but a Man of such Authority: But God deliver me, and all good Men, from his ways of securing the Church. But I must not forget that he offers at a sort of a Reason, why a *Toleration* might be welcom from K. *William*, which could not be so from K. *James*. For then he says, That *the whole Management with relation to Dissenters, was an Artifice to advance a Popish Interest.* Of this, I think, there is no doubt; and perhaps he never spake a truer word in his Life. But then, if *Toleration of the Dissenters* was what the *Papists* wanted, and have all along been so eager for, let it be obtained by what means it will, they have their *ends*, and know how to make use of it, and serve their *interest* of it; and, if such an interest (as he saith) *must needs give a just Jealousie of every thing that looks that way*. I think we have as much or more cause to be jealous now than ever. But dares our Author assert, or can he convince us, that the *Papists* were no way concerned in *William's Toleration*? He that pretends to know the *Secrets* of all *Reigns*, must needs be extraordinary skilful in that, whereof himself was so great a part. And do you think he could not out of his *Budget of Secrecies*, tell us something of a *private Agreement* amongst the *Confederates*, for *Favour to the Catholicks*? However, he cannot be ignorant of the *first Article* of the *Confederacy*, wherein they sware to maintain the *just Rights* of the *Holy See*, and never to make *Peace* till he be *restored* to them; now, how can a Man swear those to be *just Rights*, which he doth not believe to be so? This is enough to make any Man suspect, that he who swears thus, is at least *Popishly Affected*. Is it not commonly known, what *Indulgence* and *Favour* was then shewn to *Papists*, and how some justly condemned, were extraordinarily rescued from Justice, info much that some *Papists* did not stick to say, that their condition under him was better than under K. *James*? Were not more *New Converts* by far made in his time, than in the *Reign of K. James*? And, were they ever disturbed in their Work, or call'd to account for it? Let the *Dissenters* enjoy the *Toleration* he so furiously pleads for, but then let them use it so cautiously, that they do not let in those who will neither tolerate them nor us: And so, upon due consideration, it will be found, that this is so far from making against the *Bill*, that indeed it strongly makes for it. For that *Bill* would have cut off the *Hopes* of *Papists*, and secured us against their great
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and main design, to whom the Toleration otherwise gives too great an Advantage.

He goes on, endeavouring to persuade us, that the number of the Dissenters is much abated, at least a fourth part, if not a third part; and this he thinks to be owing to the Toleration. This looks so like a Paradox, that one would think it should not be easily swallowed: And truly, I think his Occasional Conformists may prove much like the Samaritans to the Jews; while the Church is in a tolerable condition, or there is any thing to be got by it, they are of kin to it; but if She fall into Distress, or under Persecution, the Kindred is instantly forgotten, and they become Her worst Enemys. However, not to dispute the matter with him, for a Proof of the Truth of it, I shall only refer you to a small Pamphlet lately published, wherein Legion changeth his Name to Millions, in most disgraceful, insolent, and scurrilous Terms, reproacheth the whole House of Commons, boasts of their Strength and Numbers, and therewith plainly threatens the Government; if they themselves were sensible of such decay of their Party, they would scarce act so daringly; and if the decay be to a fourth, if not a third part, it is morally impossible but that they should be sensible of it, and also apprehensive of a daily further decrease, which is no encouragement to play such Pranks; and therefore as I am not over hasty to believe him, so, if it were true, I think it is a fair Warning to the Government to secure themselves by restraining such Insolence.

Hitherto we have had a great deal of rambling Stuff to little or no purpose, and as if he were apprehensive, that it would fail him, he now takes Sanctuary in the old stale Trick of Jealousies and Fears. The Dissenters (he saith) apprehend the Toleration is aimed at; and that how little soever seems to be in this Bill, it is a step, and will be followed by more that are kept in reserve till this Point is once gained. On the contrary it seems to me, That the Bill confirms the Toleration; and if confirming a thing be to aim at its Overthrow, I know not what Security we can have for any thing; and as for his other Steps kept in reserve, if this Man of Secrets had told us what they were, we might have known what to have said to them; till then I can only look on it as blowing the Coal, and an old Artifice by concealing what he was ashamed to speak, to fill Mens Heads with more variety of Suspicions, than he knew how otherwise to put into them. But I cannot imagine what he means, when he saith, *The next Step may be for their Wives and Children.* Who are those that would be for their Wives and Children? And, what would they do with them? Or, doth he think the H. of C. would be worse than Pharaoh, and by leaving the Dissenters neither Wives nor Children, destroy the whole breed of them? This would be to break through the whole Toleration indeed, as he phraseth it; but certainly, there is no Man so silly as to fear it. I know not what Inclination his Reverence may have to other Mens Wives, but I verily believe he would let their Children alone, if it were but to avoid the trouble and charge of keeping them. But if it were lawful for me as well as this Great Man to make May-be's, I could furnish him with some, which would look

as oddly on the other side, and yet perhaps with more likelihood. For if the A&t had passed, it may be the House of Commons would have endeavoured the Repeal of it next Sessions, if they had found any inconvenience in it. It may be they may draw up a *Petition or Address*, that the Bishop of *Salisbury* may be translated to *Winchester* upon the next Vacancy. It may be they may follow the Example of *Scotland*, and make the *Dissenters* the *Church*, and the *Episcopal* Men the *Dissenters*. And who knows but the Sky may fall, and we may have Larks in abundance? For whither may not a Man run with *May-be's*? If Men will be frightened out of their Wits, and run mad with the apprehension of such *Possibilities* as carry not with them the least shew of *Probability*, we must never expect to live in *Peace and Quiet*. But he has another Trick to make us apprehensive of Danger; for saith he, *If one picks at a great Dike that keeps out the Sea, it will be thought, how small a Breach soever he makes at first, that he designs a total inundation.* Here this Man of flotid Stile, hath express'd himself so unluckily, that if he had fallen into the Hands of *Wits*, who had a mind to expose him, they might have made untoward work of it. For what means he by *picking at a Dike*? A *Dike* is an open place beneath the common level, and a *great Dike* is much lower and deeper, and therefore much fitter to let in the *Sea* than to keep it out. But I will do him the Justice, as to suppose he means the quite contrary (as perhaps he doth often) and that he intended that, which those on the *Sea Coasts* call a *Wall*, and the *Inlanders* a *Bank or Mound*; and then I agree with him so far, only I think he hath made an ill choice of a Similitude for his purpose. For, what if he should prove to be that very Man who is thus *picking at the Bank or Wall* to let in the *Sea*, and in time to raise a *total Inundation*? For, what is the *Discipline* of the *Church*, but that *Mound or Wall* which keeps out that *Raging Sea of Errors and Wickedness*? And, how can that stand with his Project? And, what are all those various *Sects and Heresies* but a boiling, foaming *Sea*, which if let in, will certainly *overwhelm and drown the Church*? And, how can the *Papist* be kept out, if the *Occasional Conformist* must be admitted? For, doth not he himself tell us, that the Marques of *Winchester* was an *Occasional Conformist* in Queen *Elizabeth's* time? And I am very well satisfied, and I believe so is he too, that their *Dispensations* now are not less *extensive*, and that they are *more improved* in making use of such *Advantages and Opportunities* to promote their *common Design*. Thus, while he is laying all open and in common, he shews himself a Workman indeed, and doth not poorly *pick at the Bank*, but carries it *quite away*. Henceforward, if he will teach no better *Doctrine*, I hope he will take care to illustrate it with more *suitable Similitudes*.

The *War* we are engaged in, is what he next insists on; and, if he had called it an *expensive War* at a time when *Trade* is low, and still sinking, I should not have gainsaid him; yea, I am not unwilling further to grant him, that *rebus sic stantibus*, a *Toleration* was requisite: But then the *War* is so far from being a Reason for putting the Power into such Mens hands, as should squander away our *Treasure*, divide and betray our *Counsels*, and

and set us together by the Ears among our selves, that it is rather a Reason against it, and consequently a Reason for passing the Bill, which so far as care could be taken, would have kept such out, and made our Counsels unanimous, and more closely and better executed. He goes on to set forth his knowledge and skill in the Politicks, and tells us what France hath said, and what *Portugal* and *Savoy* expect. But as I think this wide of the matter, so I pretend not to skill in the Politicks; only I have observed, and so I believe have most others, that there are two sorts of Politicians; one that wisely manages Affairs for the Publick Good, the other full of Trick and Knavery, who makes it his business to embroil and entangle Affairs, and put all things in disorder, that he may fish for himself in troubled Waters: Of which sort this Learned Person is, I leave it to time to discover, for I will be no Judge.

His Discourse of *War* and the *Allies* had doubtless inspired him with *valorous Thoughts* and *eagerness for Action*, and therefore not able to contain himself, he makes a sally out upon a handful of poor *forlorn Jacobites*, not worth his notice; but I find they are all drawn in for the sake of a single Person, one *L — y*, who doubtless hath very much offended him; and yet if he say true, it seems not worth His while to take offence at him. For as he describes Him, you would think him to be a *Mad-man*, for he saith he is the *furiousest Jacobite in England*; And who regards what a *Mad-man* says or does? But to deal plainly and truly, I must confess I have heard another kind of Character of him, some who pretend at least to know him very well, tell me, that on the contrary he is a Person of an even, calm, and sweet Temper; that his Conversation is very entertaining, and yet withal so instructive and profitable, that you would think *Horace* had made that Verse on purpose to describe him;

Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile Dulci.

But not to trouble you with what I have heard in his commendation, which his Works published, in a great measure vouch; if he be a Man answerable to the Character given of him, he stands in need of no Man to teach him to paint, but is able to draw an *Ecebolum* in his true and proper Colours so to the Life, that Men shall be in love with the Picture, though they had no kindness for the Person. And therefore I will not offer to take his Cause out of his hands, but leave him as best able to make his own defence; although I must confess, that I had heard so very well of him, that I should have had him in more than common estimation, if this Reverend Author had not told me he was a *Jacobite*. But though I shall not take up the Cudgels for an inconsiderable parcel of *contemptible Jacobites*, yet I shall not easily desert the *Church*, wherein I was born and bred, and which I take to be the best on Earth, if She might be suffered to be Herself. I wish the distinction of *High Church* and *Low Church* had never been invented, and that there had been no Reason for it; but I am sensible that some Men are labouring to bring Her so very *Low*, that She shall lie flat on the Ground, if they would not have her *Under-ground*, and *bury* Her. And the Principle this Author goes on, (if that can deserve the

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Name of a Principle, which determines a Man to nothing, and makes him no other but such a thing as the Poets describe *Fortune, only constant in Inconstancy*) would quickly murther her, and very ill agrees with what he gravely says, That our legal Establishment founded on the Primitive Pattern, is the true measure of our Church ; and those who rise above it, are as much out of the way as those who fall below it. I wish he would stick to this, and I wonder how he durst say it. For except some particular Usages in some particular Churches grounded on particular Reasons, which no Man could have just cause to except against, the Doctrine and Discipline of the Primitive Church was every where the same, their Members bound to constant Communion, and though by initiation in a particular Church they became Members of the Catholick Church, and so had a right to Communion in all Churches of Catholick Communion, where ever their Affairs might lead them, yet they were not admitted without their Communicatory Letters, to testifie that they came from a Church of the same approved Communion, and had not, nor did not Communicate with any Hereticks or Schismaticks, or any that divided or separated from the Church, and set up opposite Communions. Nay, the very Hereticks and Schismaticks of those Times, were generally so far Catholicks in this particular, that they would not suffer any in their Communion, but such as joined with them upon the same Principle, and were constant to them, and renounced the Communion of all others ; so that an Occasional Conformist in those times would have been spewed out, not only by Catholicks, but even by Hereticks and Schismaticks themselves, as such an unclean Beast that was not fit to be admitted into any Herd whatsoever : And all this our Learned Author cannot but know ; the compass of his Reading hath been too great to be ignorant of these things. When therefore he avers, that our Church is founded on the Primitive Pattern, and yet will have her obliged to admit to her Communion Occasional Conformists, such as Atheists, Deists, Papists, Muggletonians, and all the loosest of Hereticks and Schismaticks, I appeal to the Christian World, whether this Man must not necessarily be thought to speak against his own Knowledge and Conscience ! And, what can you think of such a Man ? Doth not such a Bishop deserve to be made a Metropolitan, or something else ? As he proceeds, instead of giving us Reasons, he tells us Stories ; That an eminent Papist used often to say, That he was for the Church of England as by Law Established. And why said he so ? Because he looked on Queen Mary's Laws as yet in full force, and thought Queen Elizabeth, who repeal'd them, had no more right to the Crown than O. Cromwel ; and therefore he is jealous, when he hears some Persons pretend to much Zeal for the Church of England as by Law established. He hath abundantly satisfied me, that he is not troubled with over-much Zeal for it : But then, must all Persons that mean honestly, be condemned for one equivocating Person ? Could he not have told us another Story, that the Dissenters of late stick not openly to boast, that by Virtue of the Act of Toleration, they are established by Law, and therefore as much the Church of England by Law established as any other. The Impudence and Sophistry of each Plea I shall not stay to unravel : But, had it not look'd like a much fairer Inference to observe from hence, that both Papist and Dissenter equally aim at the Destruction of that which is, and hath been generally accounted the Church of England

England by Law established? And that he, who pleads the Cause of the one, lends a helping Hand to the other. But if he dares not be zealous for the Church of England as by Law established, he would do well to tell us what he is zealous for; for he is a Man of Zeal, and must be zealous for something. If it be for the Dissenters (as it is most likely) he hath free leave to go over to them; only I think it reasonable, that he who will leave a Church, wherein is a due Succession of Authority, to go over to them, who set up of themselves, and have no Commission from Jesus Christ, ought first to be deprived of his own Orders.

To aggravate the matter, he tells you, that the Fury of others heightens the Jealousie; and, he thinks, the Bill could produce no great Matters, if there were not something under it. Could there be any thing under it which could escape his Sight, who spies out the Secrets of all the Courts in Christendom? And, is not this to accuse the whole House as weak-sighted Fellows, unless he could tell us, what was under it, or give us some better Reason for the Jealousie? But, doubtless, the Bill was not intended for nothing; and some have thought that it might in time have settled both Church and State, and secured both from Convulsions and Overturnings; and to be jealous of so good Effects, is not an Argument of the best Subject; and these being hindered by the casting it out so hastily, makes some apt to think, that there was more *under that* than they were willing to speak. He pursues his Jealousie with a tedious and doleful complaint, of the ill Treatment, which the Head of their Order, Himself, and their Bench have met with, but wisely forbears to instance in any Particulars, lest a Narrative of the Matters should have shewn, that there was too much cause for it. It is a hard case, when Presbyters are forced to ruffle Bishops in defence of Episcopacy it self; but it is a harder, when Bishops shall make use of their Authority to protect Tolands, and such profligate Wretches, who either revive old Heresies, or broach new ones, and not suffer so much as a Censure to pass on them; nay, shall exert their own Authority against it self, if not to destroy it, yet to render it insignificant. May it not be suspected, that there is more of Trick and Design, than Honesty and Christian Prudence in this? But to clear the Matter, he gives you an account of their Lives and Actions, but most particularly of his own, and in such a Dress, that you would take them at least for Saints, if not Angels. I have nothing to do with them; and as for our Author his Life and Actions are tolerably well known; let them be compared with what he here says, and a Judgment be made of the truth of it: For tho' I have several things to object, yet I hate to rake into a Man's Life to expose his Faults; we have all too many; and I wish he were as good as he boasts himself to be, and better, if it were possible. But because he himself mentions one Particular, which may affect others, I shall only make a short and slender Remark on it. When he had set forth his Noble Performance in writing the History of the Reformation, he says, That he wrote purely what was his own sense of things, which I fear will prove true in too many Particulars: But then I must tell him, that I had rather he had given me downright Matter of Fact, than his own sense of things for History. There is a wide difference between a History-Writer and an History-Maker; a just Historian ought not, like

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the Spider, to spin it out of himself, but plainly and fully to set forth what Matters truly are, or have been ; and if he will say he hath all along done thus, it is more than I dare vouch for him, though I have read it.

Hitherto we have been wandering about, like *Gypsies*, without any certain Abode ; now we begin to draw homewards, and approach towards the *Bill*, but so gingerly and warily as if we dreaded to come at it ; and therefore we shall dwell as long as we can upon the *Title*, that we may have less to say to the *Bill*. The *Title* he makes to be *Occasional Conformity*. Now, what need was there to epitomize the *Title*, was it so tedious or odious that he could not give us it at length ? By all the *Title* he gives it, a Man cannot tell whether the *Bill* be for or against *Occasional Conformity* : What secret Reason he hath for this, I will not pretend to know. But let the *Title* be *Occasional Conformity*, what hath he then to say to it ? Why, he saith, *He cannot in the general condemn this, but as it is accompanied with Error and Mistake in the particular Instance*. And here the Oracle speaks *Riddles*, so that there needs an *Oedipus* : For, what doth he mean, that he cannot condemn the *Title of the Bill*, or he cannot condemn *Occasional Conformity* ? Or, what is this *particular Instance* wherein he can condemn either ? Here I was puzzled for some time ; but if I may guess at his meaning by what follows, it is this, That he approves of *Occasional Conformity* between Churches more or less perfect, but condemns it when accompanied with such Error as makes the Communion sinful, as with wicked Societies, or those which are really no Churches, as with the *Muggletonians* or *Quakers*, though these last are too numerous to have disengaged them by naming them. As for his *Churches more or less perfect*, we shall have a touch at them anon ; in the mean time, let us see his Reasons for this : And truly they are wonderful, and like himself ; for instead of Reasons, he only propo-*feth* his own Practice, both in what he hath done, and what upon occasion he shall do ; he most magisterially, as if he had stolen the *Pope's Infallibility*, makes his own *Example a Pattern* for all others, as if no Man could do amiss, who followed it. This is a little too much. The Blessed St. Paul indeed, bids us be *Followers of him*, but then he gives it this Limitation, *as he also was of Christ*. But now we are to mind neither St. Paul, nor Christ himself, but like true *Postillions of Reformation*, to drive through thick and thin after a *Scotch English-Bishop*. I my self (saith he) *was an Occasional Conformist in Geneva and Holland*. Who doubts it ? Yet not a word of what was done at *Rome*, when entertained in Cardinal *Howard's Palace*. But could the *Defects*, which you confess to be in *their Constitution*, be an encouragement to this, when you acknowledge that at the same time you held Communion with our own Church according to the *Liturgy* ? Or, whatever was your Practice, if you then preach'd the same Doctrine you do now, do not you think you should have preach'd away all your Auditors, or left your self but a very thin Congregation ? For, to what purpose should Men in a strange Country, bring an *O-dium* upon themselves, and disgust others, by setting up a strange Communi-*on*, when they might lawfully join in the Worship of the Country, which would be without Offence ? But here he comes on with an unsufferable and most malicious *Insinuation*, as if he and others were designed to be knock'd

't b' head, if the Bill had passed ; that is to say, that the Promoters of the Bill were Cut-throats and Murtherers. Is not this to render the Church odious, as if Her Principles were Sanguinary, and all Her true Members Men of Blood ? Is this your Moderation ? It is well known, that the Party he pleads for have been very prodigal of other Mens Lives, and that those, whom he accuseth, have been merciful to their own hurt. What some Men meditate themselves, they are too apt to accuse others of : This is like stabbing a Man to the Heart, and stealing the bloody Knife into another's Pocket. But if by slipping Beyond Sea, he could escape knocking on the Head, he tells you what he would do, I marry would he : He would Communicate with the Foreign Churches, but would likewise gather all of this Church about him, and continue to worship God according to the Liturgy, to his Lives end ; i. e. he will continue it with Interruptions ; sometimes adhere to it, and at others abandon it. But let him do so, if he will ; I do not intend he shall be a Precedent for me.

But he aims at something like a Reason for this ; therefore let us examine that. It remains (saith he) then a Point of Opinion, which Church or Society is the more, and which the less perfect. And here he liberally grants, nay more, saith, he is very sure, our Church is the more perfect and regular, and that the Separation is formed upon Error and Mistake, and that true Edification is among us, and not among them. I wish he would go and preach this Doctrine in Scotland. But can this be an encouragement to go to them ? If we cannot mend our selves, why should we make our selves worse ? Why should we run thither, where there is no true Edification ? But is all this no more than a Point of Opinion ? He may, and certainly doth know, it is more than such a diminutive thing. Whether the Ordinances are effectually administered, whether the Covenants between God and Men be duly sealed and ratified, whether they are so much as an Organical Church, or more than a meer Voluntary Society, where a just Succession of Ecclesiastical Authority is wanting, are Questions of no small moment. But though I am not willing to enter upon the Argument, yet I do freely confess, that I fear, that neither they, nor this Learned Prelate to help them, will be able to bring them fairly off it. But suppose the Difference to be between Churches more or less perfect ; yet, doth not he confess there is a Separation, and that they are to blame in every part of it ? And, doth not this make a Schism, and consequently Communion unlawful on the one side or the other ? But this hath been already proved, and I delight not in Repetitions. But (he saith) some of them by an unhappy Education think otherwise. I doubt it not, and have a better Opinion of the Sincerity of many of them, than I have of his, who pleads their Cause ; and therefore heartily pity them. But, doth the being in an Error create a Privilege to continue in it, and propagate it ? Or, if Men be obstinate in their Errors, whether of the two is the part of a Bishop, to cocker and encourage Men in Error, or to convince Gainsayers ? But he further saith, That if it (I suppose he means the Act) is intended to tolerate them under their other Mistakes, he doth not see why this should not be tolerated likewise. If he doth not see, I am afraid it is because he will not ; for he is sometimes so quick-sighted, that he can see what no body else can. What can be the reason for tolerating an erroneous Communion, but that :

that, poor Men, they are not satisfied in Conscience to join in ours ? And, doth this make for or against Occasional Conformity ? If they were convinced of the lawfulness of our Communion, and that they could join in it, there would be no need of any Toleration. But suppose some to be so loose, that they can go here, or there, or any where ; is there no difference to be made between *Sincerity* and *Hypocrisie* ? Or, must these be admitted to corrupt the Church, when the other, tho' in Error, of their own accord keep themselves out of it ? Or, is there no difference between *bare tolerating* Error, and *rewarding* and *fortifying* it with Interest and Power ? None so blind as they who will not see.

If any thing may be done, for which there is a Precedent, I fear scarce any Wickedness can be committed, which will not be justifiable ; when Men therefore bring Precedents instead of Reasons, it ought to be considered not only, whether they be truly and fully related, and come up to the Case, but whether they be justifiable. For there are more Precedents for bad Matters than good. Our Author's way all along here, hath been, instead of Reasons to furnish us with Tales and Stories, and to bring Precedents and Examples of himself and others, and to make his Inferences from thence, and so he goes on. He tells us of a *common Topick* used all along in Disputes against Dissenters, *That they should come as near the Church as they could, and do all that they could do with a good Conscience*. I will not answer for other Mens management, tho' I see no hurt in this. Their meaning was I suppose, to persuade them, that they should not stubbornly and humorously condemn these things as unlawful, which they were never able to prove so, that they should lay aside Bias and Prejudice, and consider things seriously and impartially ; which would be a means at least by degrees, to make them see their Errors so clearly and fully, that they would find there was no cause to seperate, but that they ought to return to the Communion of the Church. But there is a great difference between Dispute and Practice. Did they ever tell the Dissenters, that they might communicate against their Conscience ? Or, did they persuade them to an indifference to any Communion whatsoever ? If they had ; I believe the Dissenters would have desired no greater advantage against them, but would have told them roundly of it, and openly proclaimed them to the World as Knaves. And therefore, I think he might better have forborn telling us, *That the Occasional Conformists in his Diocese are without number*. For I think it little for the Reputation or Comfort of a Pastor, to have the oversight of such a wild, stragling Flock, whom he can have no command of. And it is nothing better, if he endeavour to make them so. As for Occasional Conformity, why it should be worse treated than other Errors, I have told him already, and am not willing to repeat my Answers so often as he doth his Questions.

At last he comes to the *Bill it self*, as he saith ; but indeed it is not to the *Bill*, but something he pretends to miss in the *Bill*. And here I am somewhat at a loss ; for though I have read the *Bill*, yet I have it not by me ; and we cannot here so easily procure things as you in *London* ; who can have any thing presently for Money ; and being it did not pass into Act, I did not think I should have any further occasion for it. But for all that, notwithstanding his Blustering, his Reasons are not so strong but that they may be easily answered.

swered. He misseith (he saith) a Preamble here, that was in the former Bill, in favour of Toleration. But with what Reason could he expect that this Bill should be the very same with that, which miscarried in the former Sessions? That perhaps might have been judged to look too much like Obstinacy and a Trial of Skill. I therefore suppose, that the Commons prudently designed to cut off all Superfluities, and make the Bill, tho' full, yet as short as possible, and by that means, what in them lay, to prevent all Exceptions. And tho' I dare not say, this was one Reason why it was cast out without offering any Amendments, yet what need was there of such Preamble, when the Bill it self confirms the Toleration. There might be some reason for Toleration of Tender Consciences in relation to God and his Worship; but if Men have such troublous Consciences that they will not be satisfied without Wealth, and Power, and Places of Trust, I think it is fit such Consciences should give in Security for their Good Behaviour; and that is all the Bill takes care of. And therefore I cannot think it prudently done, upon account of leaving out this needless Preamble, to charge the House with a design to overthrow the Toleration, and that in very indecent, reproachful, and provoking Language. I can hardly think he would have done thus, if he had not at least had great hopes of their Dissolution.

He is very much offended, That after the Corporation Act, and Test Act are set forth in the Bill, it is said, *That it was intended, that all Men comprehended in them, should be, and always continue to be of the Communion of the Church of England.* To this he gives two Answers; the Sum of the First is this, *That there is no such Clause; i. e. That those words are not in either of those Acts.* And I believe it to be true; but it doth not at all follow from thence, that it was not the intention of those Acts; nay, it is evident that it was the principal intention of those Acts, for the Dissenter separating from the Church, because he thought her Communion unlawful; and thus far conscientiously making himself liable to Trouble and Punishment rather than he would do what he thought unlawful, it was reasonable to conclude, that this Man would never come into that Communion unless he were satisfied of the lawfulness of it; and when he was so, the want of that being the only thing kept him from it, he could pretend to no good reason to leave it; and his own advantage would advise him to keep to it. It might therefore be reasonably supposed in this case, that what this Man did once, he would always stick to. But it seems those Law-makers relied too much upon Mens Sincerity, and through their over-charitableness, did not so sufficiently declare and ratifie their Intention, but that the Occasional Conformist found out a way to defeat their Intention, and elude their Acts.

The other Reason he gives, why that was not the intention of those Acts, is in these words, *That how unlimited soever the Enacting Power may be, yet in a recital, a thing must either be as it is set forth to be, or all the Authority on Earth cannot make it to be otherwise than it is.* And this also is true; A Man can be bound to no more than what is set forth, let whatsoever will be intended; but yet an Intention may be weakly set forth, or a thing may be set forth not according to the Intention, or short of the Intention; which is the case here. For they thinking Men had been bound up by the nature of the thing, were not careful to express themselves in such words as should tie Men up to

to constant Communion by the Letter of the Act ; and of this, crafty, loose Persons made their advantage , and found a way to frustrate the design and intention of those Acts, and to make them insignificant : And therefore to supply those Defects, and to obviate such Tricks and Evasions, this Bill was brought in ; and therefore, those who are for the continuance of the Corporation and Test Acts ought to have been zealous for this Bill, which prevents tricking them, and gives them their true and full intended force. And tho' this may be an Argument, that our Author is not very hearty for the Corporation and Test Acts, yet it is no Argument against this Bill. For the intention of those Acts is apparent, and there being a defect in setting it forth, it is but just that it should be supplied.

At length he knows not what he may agree to, when it shall be a proper time. But he cannot agree to a Fine of Fifty Pounds for going to a Meeting tolerated by Law. But it is no such thing ; they may safely go to all the Meetings in the Kingdom, if they have nothing else to do, in their private Capacity ; but the Fine is for forfeiting the Security they had given the Government, who had bestowed upon them Places of Profit and Trust ; and in such case, the Ingratitude and Falseness considered, some would be apt to think the Fine too little. In conclusion he makes a Noise, which he thinks will sound all the World over, if the Meetings at the Foreign Churches tolerated among us should be excepted : And yet I am confident, that the Dissenters themselves, upon due consideration, will be against him , and not be apprehensive of any such Noise. For, why should Strangers have a greater Privilege than the Natives and Home-born ? Besides, to give a Privilege to them which is denied to the Dissenters, is to give a supereminence to them above all others, as if they were the more perfect Churches, and all our own (to speak in our Author's Language) less perfect ; which would be a Scandal equally upon the Church, and all the Dissenters Meetings, as if Communion were no where so excellent and desirable as with them : And I am apt to think, that the Dissenters have not so ill an Opinion of themselves as to bear this. Let Foreigners therefore be content with equal Privileges with the Natives , and not think to be set above them.

He concludes, That for these Reasons, he thinks the Bill ought not to be now entertained, but the Subject Matter of it to be left to be considered at a more proper time. And when shall that be ? And I have considered his Reasons, and can find nothing in them, but that the Bill might have passed at this time , to the great good and benefit both of Church and State. And indeed, I cannot find that he produceth one Reason which directly affects the Bill. For if I be not mistaken, the case is this ; Whether the Dissenters shall be tolerated in their own way of Worship, according to their Consciences, in their private Capacity, which is granted them ; or, whether they shall be admitted to Places of Power and Trust, without giving any Security to the Government, that they will not endeavour to disserve or over-turn it, which, if the Bill had pass'd, had been deny'd them ? And throughout this whole long rambling Speech, I cannot find one Reason directly pointed against this. There are only Two Things, or rather Blinds, which with some Men may seem to carry

carry some shew of Reason, and those only scatteringly hinted, not insisted upon : That is to say, a pretence of *Moderation*, and the ill timing of the Bill. But these are Pleas generally trump'd up by designing Men ; when a thing is so just and reasonable, that they have nothing else to say against it. *Moderation* is a good thing, rightly understood : But, how often are *Vices* slurr'd upon us under the Name of *Virtues*? Let *Moderation* be a *Virtue*, yet *Lukewarmness* is a *Vice*, and *Treachery* and *Hypocrisie* still worse : And here *Moderation* it self is made a Plea against a *Bill*, which was the most likely thing that could be to cool our *Heats*, secure *Church* and *State*, and reduce us to *Moderation* and *Sobriety*. It is a strange *Moderation*, which pleads for *Madness* and *Disorder*, and against the rectifying them. Then for the ill-timing of the *Bill*, wherein lies it ? Is it an ill time to set things to rights, when they are all in *Disorder* and *Confusion*? Is it an ill time to secure *Church* and *State*, when both are likely to be torn in pieces ? The *Bill* is lost at present ; and, what if in the mean time the *Dissenters* (who most certainly would never long agree among themselves, and consequently as the Affairs of the World are, expose both us and themselves to ruin) should mount into the Saddle, and force themselves into the *Government*, would not those very Men, who now tell you it is not time yet, then laugh at you, and say with the Brazen Head, *Time's past*. And then you might have a Scotch *Moderation* set up , under which, *Church-men* themselves shall not only not be tolerated to enjoy the *Worship* of God according to their *Consciences*, but should not be suffered to live, unless in holes and corners, as it were by *Health*. Great Men may say great things, and talk big ; but notwithstanding the confidence of this Great Man, I heartily wish that all sorts of Men may not find cause to repent that this *Bill* did not pass.

Sir, I remember, that in the close of your Letter you gave me a Hint concerning *Scandalum Magnum*. And truly I am of opinion, that if a due Reverence and Respect be not paid to all sorts of Persons according to their Degrees and Stations, Government it self cannot stand, but we shall all run into Mob and Confusion : And therefore I think such Distance cannot be too well guarded, and that Transgressors in this case, ought to be severely punish'd according to the Quality of the Offence. But if any *Peer* will dispute a Point with another, especially in Point of *Conscience*, or shall please to write for the *Conviction* of others, wherein he thinks them to be in a *Mistake*, in this Particular he ought to lay aside his *Peerage*, and be upon the *Level*. For every Man hath as good right to *Reason* and *Argument* as the greatest *Peer* whatsoever. For if my Reasoning, though never so just, shall be cramp'd with a *Scandalum Magnum*, and I must submit, and depart from my own Sense at every turn, right or wrong, upon that account ; tho' this may not be called *Popery*, *Supremacy*, or *Infallibility*, yet it is somewhat very like it by another Name ; nor is the *Protestant*, who in this case must be determined by *Scandalum Magnum*, in much better Condition than the *Papist*, who is over-awed by the *Inquisition*. And therefore I should rather run the hazard of *Scan. Mag.* than give up my Rights as a *Christian*, a *Subject*, and even a *meer Man* or *rational Creature*. For even this I can scarce be thought to be, if I must have no more Reason or Conscience than that allows me. But tho' I thank you for your caution, yet I think it needless ; and I should do great wrong to this Author, if I should but pretend to the apprehension of any such thing. For the *Reverend Father* hath very generously pass'd his Word, and in consequence thereof pawn'd his Honour, *That how hardly soever he may be treated by others, he shall never treat any hardly in Matters of Conscience*. And, I thank God, I have always acted upon a Principle of *Conscience*, and do so in this Matter.

Having now gratified your Request, I give you free leave to make what use of it you please ; and am

May 1. 1704.

SIR, Your Affectionate Old Friend and Servant, A. B. C.



